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Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

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TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer

FROM: Dean C. Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

REPORT ON COUNTY EFFORTS TO COMPLY WITH THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT (NVRA)

This report is in response to your board motion, adopted on September 16, 2014. The motion asked the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk to report to your Board on County efforts to comply with provisions of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993. This report provides an overview of current compliance efforts and the persisting need for providing voter registration assistance at point-of-service in designated County departments/offices.

Introduction

In 2012, California ranked 45th in eligible citizens registered to vote. Based on data reported by the United States Census Bureau, there are 1.2 million citizens in Los Angeles County who are eligible to vote, but who remain unregistered. Social service and public assistance agencies have a high likelihood of interacting with a large share of this unregistered population. One of the frequently cited reasons eligible citizens remain unregistered is a lack of information and understanding of where and how to register to vote. As a result, the Departments of Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC), Public Social Services (DPSS), Mental Health (DMH) and Health Services (DHS) collaborated to counter the voter registration gap. DPSS, DMH and DHS partnered with the RR/CC in a coordinated effort to expand and strengthen the County's compliance with provisions of the NVRA and in the implementation of Senate Bill 35 (SB 35).

In general, as described by the NVRA, departments identified as "public assistance agencies" are mandated to provide specific voter registration services in an integrated manner with the provision of other public services offered in their offices. By assisting members of the public

who visit DPSS, DMH and DHS offices, the County affords such citizens the opportunity to register and, thus, use the power of their vote to have a say in public policy and in the national/statewide dialogue surrounding services and benefits they receive.

Moreover, the NVRA and SB 35 are federal and state mandates. Compliance by public assistance agencies (DPSS, DMH and DHS) is a matter of legal accountability. Failure to provide voter registration opportunities to individuals who visit offices to apply for or renew services and benefits, as well as changing their name or address, and failure to fully comply with all other requirements of the NVRA and SB 35 subjects the County to legal liability.

National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was passed by Congress in 1993 to increase the political participation of populations that have historically been underrepresented in our democracy. When an agency satisfies the requirements of the NVRA, they are often providing someone the first opportunity to take part in the political process that governs their benefits, services, and in many ways, their everyday lives.

The NVRA mandates that voter registration must be offered to the public at offices providing public assistance and offices providing services to people with disabilities. Other examples of NVRA agencies include the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Franchise Tax Board, the Board of Equalization and Armed Services Recruitment Stations; however, these are not services or agencies directly under the County's jurisdiction.

Under provisions of the NVRA, consumers of public services in designated agencies are required to be offered voter registration services and assistance when they:

- Apply for services or benefits for themselves or on behalf of a minor;
- Renew or recertify services or benefits for themselves or on behalf of a minor;
- Submit a change of name or address for themselves or on behalf of a minor.

Additionally, voter registration opportunities are mandated during remote transactions, such as those conducted by mail, by phone, or over the Internet.

Senate Bill 35 (SB 35)

To ensure that California's public assistance agencies fully comply with the NVRA, in 2012 the state legislature passed Senate Bill 35 (SB 35), which established statewide NVRA best practices and standards, making California a leader in NVRA implementation and compliance. Passage of SB 35 was prompted by an 81% decrease in voter registration attributable to public assistance agencies in California from 1996 to 2011.

SB 35 established procedures to register voters in accordance with the NVRA, and requires public assistance agencies providing voter registration services to perform specified tasks. Such tasks include providing links for registering to vote on agency websites, providing a voter preference form during voter registration opportunities and designating an agency employee to be responsible for NVRA compliance.

Based on the covered agencies described in the NVRA and/or SB 35, we identified the following agencies or programs as mandated agencies within the County organization:

Covered Departments:

- Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS)
- Department of Health Services (DHS)
- Department of Mental Health (DMH)

Covered Programs:

- Medi-Cal
- CalFRESH
- CalWORKS
- In Home Support Services

For your reference, non-County programs covered by NVRA include:

- WIC
- Covered California
- Department of Rehabilitation
- Independent Living Centers
- Regional Centers
- Office of Deaf Access Contractors
- State Mental Health Programs

It is important to note, while DPSS, DMH and DHS are designated NVRA agencies responsible for offering voter registration opportunities to customers, only offices where members of the public may apply for and recertify benefits and services are mandated to provide specified voter registration services under the NVRA.

Existing NVRA Compliance Efforts in Los Angeles County

The County has made clear efforts to provide voter registration assistance at key agencies and points-of-service, in compliance with the NVRA. Prior to initiating the current interdepartmental collaborative approach, coordination between the RR/CC and the designated departments was limited to the distribution of registration applications.

Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)

DPSS has an extensive compliance program under the NVRA:

1. The Department has a manager who was responsible for overseeing NVRA activities.
2. Voter registration forms were being ordered by DPSS staff at many of their offices throughout Los Angeles County and stocked as a standard form at the Department's warehouse in Commerce.

3. Voter preference forms were being provided when offering voter registration to each individual. (Sample of provided in Appendix A.)
4. Voter registration assistance was offered, using the LEADER system (client intake) prompts DPSS staff to provide the appropriate forms.
5. Voter registration forms and voter preference forms were included in mailings related to individuals who apply, by mail, for benefits and services.
6. Staff was trained on NVRA compliance and best practices.

Department of Health Services (DHS)

Prior to the current initiative, DHS had been offering voter registration opportunities through some in-person interactions, mailings and displays on office counters.

Department of Mental Health (DMH)

DMH, in collaboration with the RR/CC has identified service points where NVRA compliance can be implemented and expanded. We are working with DMH to expand these opportunities.

Identifying the Need for Collaboration

At the beginning of 2014, the RR/CC, DPSS, DMH and DHS saw the need to better coordinate the County's compliance with the NVRA in an effort to expand voter registration opportunities during point of service with our public and to increase voter registration rates. Sagging voter registration numbers prompted the need for an increased and more collaborative effort. The RR/CC engaged with two knowledgeable NVRA community partners, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund. One of the benefits of broadening our partnership to include the ACLU and NALEO was that they could provide additional insight and community resources.

All parties understood the need for increased voter registration activity. Per the California Secretary of State, between January and November 2013, public assistance agencies in Los Angeles County registered a total of 762 voters. This number led all counties throughout California; with San Diego ranked second at just over 600 registrations. (See Appendix B) Mostly, Los Angeles led due to its sheer size. However, upon closer look, public assistance agencies in Los Angeles County had the lowest voter registration averages per capita when compared to similar agencies across the state and nation. Furthermore, when reviewing the voter registration reports, the RR/CC noticed irregular reporting by the various public assistance offices and determined that forming a partnership could help improve the tracking of registration activity and compliance.

Additionally, the ACLU and NALEO indicated that more attention was needed to make sure public assistance agencies in Los Angeles County were in compliance, and the two organizations offered to work collaboratively with the County to help ensure full NVRA compliance.

The Role of the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC)

The RR/CC initiated a coordinated effort where we now act as the hub for NVRA compliance in the County. Through a reboot and restructuring of the County's NVRA efforts, the RR/CC provides materials, training, tracking and other assistance to DPSS, DHS and DMH.

Working collaboratively with sister Departments, the RR/CC embarked on a new strategy in terms of facilitating and tracking compliance with the NVRA at the County's public assistance agencies. The goals of this effort are to:

- Empower each agency to implement best practices for compliance;
- Improve sharing of voter registration information and reporting data;
- Provide annual trainings for agency staff to reinforce compliance and introduce best practices.

This strategy has already leveraged existing best practices to share with other departments and trainings. DPSS, for example, historically has offered integrated voter registration services through its programs. The RR/CC built off of what had already been implemented at DPSS, and worked to adapt its strategy within the confines of each of the other Department's operations.

Elements of the Initiative

NVRA Workshops/Trainings

Each Department was provided training through an NVRA workshop conducted by RR/CC, ACLU and NALEO staff. DPSS, DMH and DHS sent a site coordinator (a representative from each office) who was trained as the NVRA representative for their respective offices. Higher level managers assisted with providing a location and recruiting. The goal of each workshop was to provide each attendee with knowledge and skills that can be taken back to their respective offices to train front-line staff.

Total workshop attendance: DPSS – 31; DMH – 27; and DHS – 15.

The following are key topics offered at each NVRA workshop:

- What is the NVRA and what is SB 35?
- Need for full compliance of NVRA.
- Why it is important for public assistance agencies to provide voter registration opportunities?
- How to provide voter registration in an integrated manner.
- Best practices and steps for ensuring that voter registration is properly offered.
- How the RR/CC will track voter registration numbers for each office and how that information will be reported.

As part of compliance, annual training is required for all offices that have NVRA responsibilities. The RR/CC will continue to work with management and other staff in each department to provide future trainings on an as needed basis.

NVRA Materials

In an effort to provide a simplified and uniform process for County compliance, the RR/CC developed a set of materials that could be easily referenced by NVRA Deputy Registrars (and others). These materials are separate from any memoranda or other documents produced internally by each Department.

Item	Purpose
The National Voter Registration Act Quick Reference Booklet	This booklet provides all the necessary information for conducting NVRA activities at each office. It provides background on the law, the basics of offering voter registration, duties and responsibilities of an NVRA Deputy Registrar and best practices. (Cover of booklet provided in Appendix C.)
NVRA Poster	This colorful poster is designed to be placed at desks, cubicles, and other workspaces to both remind a staff member to offer voter registration and also let members of the public know that the service is available. (Sample provided in Appendix F.)
Voter Registration One-Pager	Not specifically related to NVRA, however, we provide this handout because it provides a good summary of information related to voter registration. (Sample provided in Appendix G.)

- DPSS has received 6,000 NVRA Quick Reference Booklets, 150 NVRA posters, and 4,000 voter registration one-pagers.
- DMH has received 100 NVRA Quick Reference Booklets and 50 NVRA posters.
- DHS has received 100 NVRA Quick Reference Booklets and 50 NVRA posters.

Statistics

We are already seeing a positive impact surrounding our NVRA work. DPSS was the first Department to participate in a workshop and to revamp NVRA activity within its offices. That workshop was held in July 2014. Total voter registration attributed to DPSS offices for the month of July 2014 was 629. Since then, the NVRA Executive Liaison and other staff have distributed memoranda and policy documents highlighting the need for NVRA compliance and voter registration assistance at DPSS offices. As a result, voter registration numbers have increased significantly:

- August 2014: **1,183**
- September 2014: **1,478**
- October 2014: **1,435**

Currently no voter registration numbers are available specific to NVRA efforts at DMH and DHS as we are still in the initial implementation phase of the expanded and integrated reporting

process with those departments. As those numbers become available, the RR/CC will provide an update.

Community and Inter-Departmental Engagement

The RR/CC frequently collaborates with non-governmental organizations that can provide new insights and additional resources in order to better implement any number of programs. While implementing its NVRA strategy, the RR/CC partnered with the ACLU and the NALEO Educational Fund. Both organizations provided additional statistical data, insight and resources; such as staff dedicated to working solely on the NVRA.

Additionally, this collaboration has provided support and resources that have positively impacted the program and contributed to its initial success. Key to the successful partnership and collaboration has been the executive sponsorship coming directly from the Directors of each of the Departments.

What the RR/CC is Trying to Accomplish?

Through restructuring the County's priorities around NVRA compliance, the RR/CC aims to increase voter registration numbers and help close the gap of the estimated 1.2 million citizens who remain eligible, but unregistered in the County. Furthermore, by collaborating with DPSS, DHS and DMH, we are able to better inform each Department's staff on proper voter registration techniques and how to better engage potential voters.

Overall, the RR/CC seeks to facilitate inter-departmental collaboration with sister Departments to better serve the County in terms of full NVRA compliance and accomplishing our strategic goal of service excellence.

RR/CC In-Field Support

The RR/CC has conducted site visits to provide additional voter registration and education support. During the final weeks leading up to the November 2014 election, RR/CC outreach staff were on-hand to provide members of the public and County employees information about voting and registering. Outreach staff also met with NVRA Deputy Registrars to assist with any questions related to voter registration and assess their progress.

Conclusion

Ultimately, by working together to proactively address NVRA compliance and to provide greater access to voter registration, we dramatically increase the number of registered voters throughout Los Angeles County. Through voter registration, individuals become empowered to enrich their lives. This allows County Departments to live up to our goal of service excellence. Becoming a registered voter not only gives voters a voice, it improves our democratic process; which is something that benefits us all.

Appendix A

Below is a sample voter preference form.

SAVE

If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?
(Check One)

☐ Already registered. I am registered to vote at my current residence address.

☐ Yes. I would like to register to vote. (Please fill out the attached voter registration form.)

☐ No. I do not want to register to vote.

NOTE: IF YOU DO NOT CHECK A BOX, YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT THIS TIME. YOU MAY TAKE THE ATTACHED VOTER REGISTRATION FORM TO REGISTER AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.

Applicant Name _____ Date _____

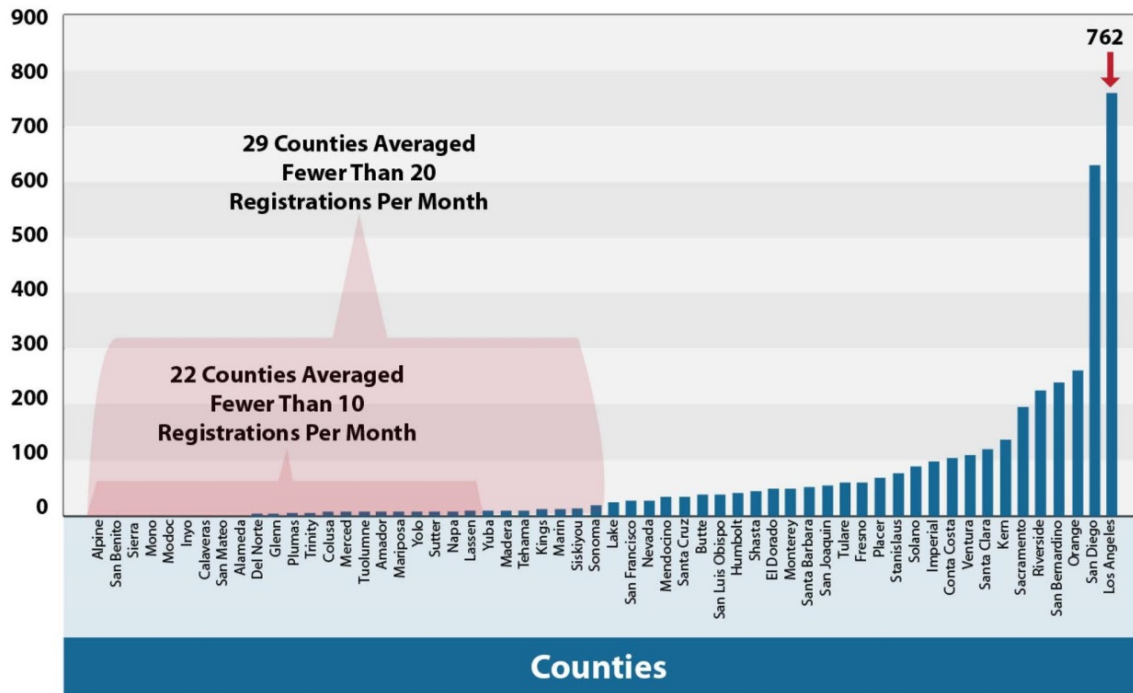
Important Notices

1. Applying to register or declining to register to vote will **not** affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency.
2. If you would like help in filling out the voter registration form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the voter registration form in private.
3. If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or to decline to register to vote, your right to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote, or your right to choose your own political party preference or other political preference, you may file a complaint with the Secretary of State by calling toll-free (800) 345-VOTE (8683) or you may write to: Secretary of State, 1500 - 11th Street, Sacramento, CA, 95814. For more information on elections and voting, please visit the Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ca.gov.

01/13 NVRA Voter Preference Form

Appendix B

Below is a table showing the average monthly registrations per month at public assistance agencies. (Data shown is January 2013 to November 2013.)

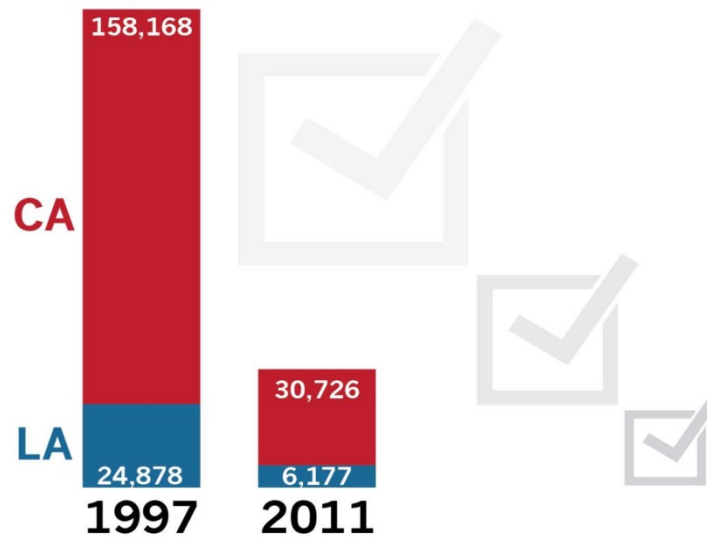


* Source: California Secretary of State.

Notes: Data reflects January to November, 2013

Appendix C

Below is a table showing the decline of voter registration at NVRA agencies between 1997 and 2011.



Appendix D

Below is the cover of the National Voter Registration Act Quick Reference Booklet.



Appendix E

Below is a sample reference guide used by front-line staff when providing voter registration assistance.

THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT	
Quick Reference Guide for Providing Voter Registration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Provide customers the opportunity to register to vote when assisting with an application for services/benefits, recertifying services/benefits, or when processing a change of address. This includes when an adult is applying on behalf of a child.2 Provide NVRA Voter Preference Form to verify that a customer would like to complete a Voter Registration Card (VRC). Unless he/she declines to register on the Voter Preference Form, assist with completing a VRC.3 Place NVRA Voter Preference Form in file and keep for two years. (Keep even if he/she marks no.)4 Mail all completed VRCs to Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk at the end of the day.5 Monitor supplies to ensure you always have enough NVRA Voter Preference Forms and VRCs on hand – you should have both items in all available languages.	
The Voter Registration contact for your office is:	
Name: _____	
Extension: _____	

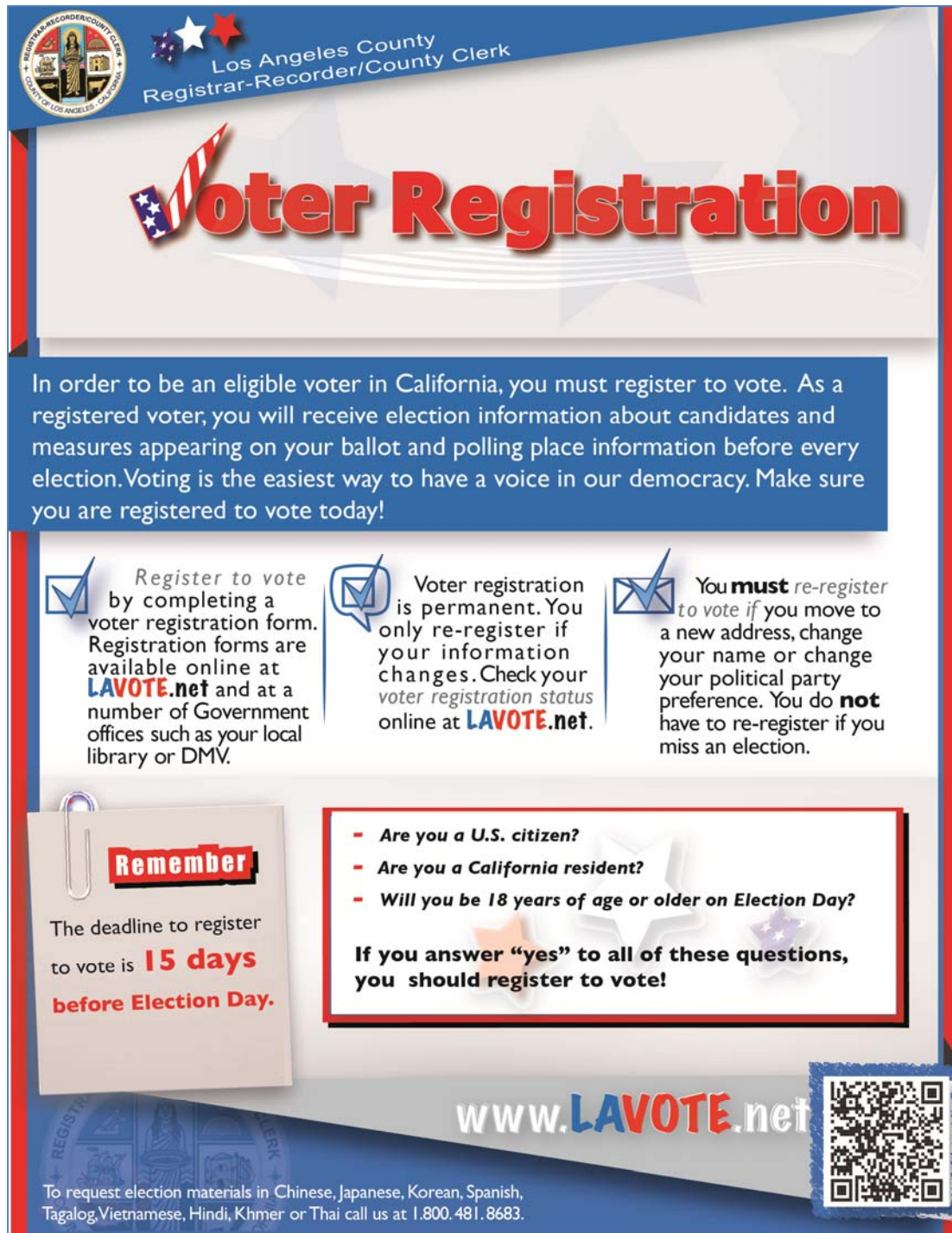
Appendix F

Below is a sample of the NVRA poster.



Appendix G

Below is a sample of the voter registration one-pager.






The image is a sample of a voter registration one-pager from the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. It features a blue header with the county seal and title. The main title "Voter Registration" is in large red letters with a checkmark icon. A blue box contains text about the importance of voter registration. Below this, three checkmark icons introduce key points: how to register, the permanence of registration, and when to re-register. A "Remember" box highlights the 15-day deadline. A red-bordered box lists three eligibility questions. The website www.LAVOTE.net is prominently displayed, along with a QR code. Contact information for requesting materials in various languages is at the bottom.

**Los Angeles County
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk**

Voter Registration

In order to be an eligible voter in California, you must register to vote. As a registered voter, you will receive election information about candidates and measures appearing on your ballot and polling place information before every election. Voting is the easiest way to have a voice in our democracy. Make sure you are registered to vote today!

-  **Register to vote** by completing a voter registration form. Registration forms are available online at **LAVOTE.net** and at a number of Government offices such as your local library or DMV.
-  Voter registration is permanent. You only re-register if your information changes. Check your voter registration status online at **LAVOTE.net**.
-  You **must** re-register to vote if you move to a new address, change your name or change your political party preference. You do **not** have to re-register if you miss an election.

Remember

The deadline to register to vote is **15 days** before Election Day.

- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Are you a California resident?
- Will you be 18 years of age or older on Election Day?

If you answer "yes" to all of these questions, you should register to vote!

www.LAVOTE.net

To request election materials in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Hindi, Khmer or Thai call us at 1.800.481.8683.

